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GEORGE SHERMAN, NEA/P EXT. 28448

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NESA-425 (4/9/81)

(FOLLOWING FS MATERIAL NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

MIDDLE EAST REPORTING IN THE U.S. PRESS (2,400)

LOS ANGELES TIMES, OSWALD JOHNSTON IN MADRID:

SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER M. HAIG JR. EMERGED WEDNESDAY FROM HIS FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST SAYING HE IS CONVINCED THAT HE HAS STARTED U.S. POLICY DOWN A NEW TRACK THAT WILL RESTORE AMERICAN PRESTIGE IN THE REGION.

"WE ARE PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS," HAIG TOLD REPORTERS AS HE LEFT SAUDIA ARBIA. "WE ACCOMPLISHED OUR STATED OBJECTIVES."

REPORTERS TRAVELING WITH HAIG ON HIS WHIRLWIND FOUR-DAY TOUR OF EGYPT, ISRAEL, JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA WERE TOLD THAT HIS PARTY ENCOUNTERED "A PROFOUND LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE UNITED STATES" AT EACH STOP AS A RESULT OF CRTER ADMINISTRATION POLICIES.

DESPITE CONTINUING HOSTILITY BY JORDANIAN AND SAUDI OFFICIALS TO THE U.S.-SPONSORED EGYPT-ISRAEL PEACE TREATY, HAIG WAS SAID TO HAVE ACHIEVED A "POSITIVE MOOD AND ATTITUDE" WHEN HE ASSERTED THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S INTENTION TO "CONFRONT SOVIET IMPERIALISM IN THE REGION."

IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS, OFFICIALS IN BOTH JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA REPEATED THEIR COUNTRIES' OPPOSITION TO U.S. POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL, AND THEY EXPRESSED FEARS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD PREOCCUPY ITSELF WITH THE SOVIETS AT THE EXPENSE OF FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE.

BUT OVER THE LAST FOUR DAYS HAIG HAS APPEARED TO MODIFY THE ADMINISTRATION'S EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPING A "STRATEGIC CONSENSUS" AGAINST THE SOVIETS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE HAS BEEN PLACING EQUAL EMPHASIS ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS AND HAS ASSERTED THAT THE TWO OBJECTIVES ARE INTERRELATED.

SETBACKS IN THE SEARCH FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ARAB-ISRAELI PRESENT THE SOVIETS WITH "A VEHICLE FOR FISHING IN TROUBLED WATERS," REPORTERS WERE TOLD...

NEW YORK TIMES, BERNARD GWERTZMAN IN MADRID:

SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER M. HAIG JR. ENDED HIS MIDDLE EAST TRIP TODAY SAYING THAT HIS MISSION HAD LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR STRONGER TIES WITH ALL COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

IN SAUDI ARABIA, THE LAST STOP OF HIS TOUR OF THREE ARAB NATIONS AND ISRAEL, MR. HAIG NOTIFIED THE SAUDIS OF WASHINGTON'S DECISION TO SELL THEM FIVE AWACS ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE AIRCRAFT AS PART OF A MULTIBILLION DOLLAR PACKAGE. THE DECISION WAS MADE DESPITE SHARP OBJECTIONS FROM ISRAEL AND ITS SUPPORTERS IN CONGRESS.

MR. HAIG'S TOP AIDES TOLD REPORTERS ABROAD HIS AIR FORCE PLACE THAT THE AWACS SALE WOULD PROVOKE A FIGHT ON CAPITOL HILL BUT THAT MR. HAIG WOULD ARGUE THAT IT MUST GO THROUGH "IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST..."

AT THE AIRPORT IN RIYADH, BEFORE DEPARTING, AND IN ROME, WHERE HE STOPPED FOR TWO HOURS TO CONFER WITH FOREIGN MINISTER EMILIO COLOMBO, SECRETARY OF STATE HAIG ASSERTED

THAT HIS DISCUSSION IN EGYPT, ISRAEL, JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, IN THAT ORDER, HAD GONE WELL AND THAT HE FOUND GENERAL AGREEMENT ON GOALS.

THIS WAS SO, HE ADDED, EVEN THOUGH THE JORDANIANS AND SAUDIS, FOR INSTANCE, HAD INDICATED PUBLICLY THEY HAD NOT WITHDRAWN THEIR OPPOSITION TO WASHINGTON'S SUPPORT FOR THE CAMP DAVID NEGOTIATIONS OR FOR ITS STRONG BACKING OF ISRAEL.

MR. HAIG TOLD REPORTERS THAT ALL THE OBJECTIVES OF HIS

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TRIP HAD BEEN MET, INCLUDING WHAT HE REGARDED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT -- ESTABLISHING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE ISRAELI AND ARAB LEADERS.

MR. HAIG'S APPROACH, REPORTERS WERE TOLD, WAS DIRECT, FIRM AND INTENDED TO UNDERLINE THAT THE UNITED STATES "NO LONGER IS GOING TO IGNORE BLATANT, ILLEGAL SOVIET INTERVENTIONISM."

IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR REPORTERS TO DETERMINE HOW SUCCESSFUL THE TRIP HAD BEEN. THERE WERE NO NEGOTIATIONS AS SUCH DURING THE MISSION AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE VARIOUS LEADERS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PRESIDENT ANWAR EL-SADAT OF EGYPT WERE NOT ALL THAT ENTHUSIASTIC. IN A MEETING WITH REPORTERS ON SUNDAY, P. SADAT WAS EFFUSIVE TOWARD MR. HAIG.

PRINCE SAUD AL-FAISAL, THE SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER, SAID AT DHIYADH AIRPORT THIS AFTERNOON THAT THE UNITED STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA SHARED THE SAME "OVERALL DIRECTION AND PERCEPTION" ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES. BUT HE ADDED THAT THE SAUDIS BELIEVED "THE MAIN CAUSE OF INSTABILITY" IN THE REGION WAS ISRAEL, NOT THE SOVIET UNION AS CLAIMED BY MR. HAIG ON HIS TRIP.

COMMENTS BY PRINCE SAUD ECHOED THOSE BY KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN AND OTHER JORDANIAN OFFICIALS WHO MET WITH MR. HAIG IN AMMAN ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY.

WASHINGTON POST, DON OBERDORFER IN MAJID:

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION, HAVING INFORMED SAUDI ARABIA OF ITS WILLINGNESS TO SUPPLY A MAJOR PACKAGE OF NEW MILITARY GEAR, IS PREPARING WHAT AN OFFICIAL TRAVELING WITH SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER M. HAIG JR. DESCRIBED TODAY AS THE "SUBSTANTIAL TASK" OF CONVINCING CONGRESS TO APPROVE THE SALES.

THE U.S. DECISION, CONVEYED TO THE SAUDIS IN RECENT DAYS BY A MESSAGE FROM DEFENSE SECRETARY CASPER WEINBERGER, BECAME KNOWN AS HAIG LEFT THE OIL-RICH KINGDOM, THE FINAL STOP OF A FOUR-DAY MIDDLE EAST TOUR, AND HEADED FOR WESTERN EUROPE. THE MAIN ITEMS IN THE PACKAGE ARE FIVE AIRBORNE WARNING AND CONTROL SYSTEM (AWACS) PLANES.

AS UNIDENTIFIABLE "SENIOR OFFICIAL" WHO TRAVELS WITH SECRETARIES OF STATE TOLD REPORTERS ABOARD HAIG'S PLANE THAT "I DON'T PRETEND WE DON'T HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL TASK AHEAD OF US" TO CONVINCE CONGRESS IN VIEW OF STRONG OPPOSITION FROM ISRAEL, ESPECIALLY TO THE AWACS. THE OFFICIAL WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WILL EXPLAIN TO CONGRESS THE MOTIVATIONS FOR ITS DECISION, THE IMPLICATIONS, PURPOSE AND CAPABILITIES OF THE EQUIPMENT AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTING THE SALES.

"WE'LL GET IT THROUGH," HE DECLARED.

THE MILITARY SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA WILL THUS PROVIDE A TEST OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY OF WINNING DIVERSE REGIONAL ALLIES AND SEEKING A WORKABLE "STRATEGIC CONSENSUS."

THE SAUDIS, LIKE HAIG AND MOST OTHERS IN THE AREA, PRIVATELY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT LITTLE CAN BE DECIDED OR DONE ABOUT THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE IN ADVANCE OF THE ISRAELI ELECTION JUNE 30. THIS HAS GIVEN THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

A RESPITE FROM DEMANDS FOR AN IMMEDIATE START ON RENEWING OR AMENDING THE CAMP DAVID PROCESS, WHICH ENGAGES ISRAEL AND EGYPT BUT CONTINUES TO BE STRONGLY OPPOSED BY JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA.

WALL STREET JOURNAL, KAREN HOUSE IN RIYADH:

SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER HAIG APPEARS TO HAVE REORDERED HIS CONCERNS ABOUT MIDDLE EAST SECURITY AFTER A 24-HOUR VISIT HERE.

MR. HAIG, WHO HAS REPEATEDLY GIVEN PRECEDENCE TO THE SOVIET THREAT RATHER THAN TO TURBULENCE GROWING OUT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE, YESTERDAY SAID BOTH PROBLEMS ARE OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE.

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"WE AREN'T ADOPTING ANY PARTICULAR PRIORITY, IN OTHER WORDS, PUTTING THE SOVIET REGIONAL THREAT AHEAD OF PROGRESS IN THE PEACE PROCESS, NOT AT ALL," HE SAID AT AN AIRPORT NEWS CONFERENCE BEFORE LEAVING FOR ROME AND MADRID.

"WHAT WE ARE EMPHASIZING IS THAT THESE ARE INTER-RELATED BECAUSE CLEARLY A FAILURE TO ACHIEVE PROGRESS IN THE PEACE PROCESS OFFERS THE SOVIET UNION TROUBLED WATERS IN WHICH TO FISH." THAT ASSESSMENT WAS MUSIC TO SAUDI EARS, AND OFFICIALS HERE EXPRESS SATISFACTION WITH THE HAIG VISIT. "WE LIKE WHAT HE SAID," SAID ONE OFFICIAL. "NOW WE HAVE TO FIND IF HE DOES IT"...

SECRETARY HAIG, UNDER PRESSURE AT HOME FOR HIS PERFORMANCE IN THE EARLY HOURS AFTER PRESIDENT REAGAN WAS SHOT AND HIS DISPUTE WITH THE WHITE HOUSE OVER WHO WOULD MANAGE FOREIGN POLICY CRISES, MAY HAVE ENHANCED HIS IMAGE WITH HIS PERFORMANCE HERE.

THE SAUDIS WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO AFFORD HIM SPECIAL TREATMENT, INCLUDING A DINNER AT WHICH CROWN PRINCE FADH WAS HOST. AND PRINCE SAUD, A RESERVED MAN, WAS CORDIAL IN HIS FAREWELL TO MR. HAIG.

NEW YORK TIMES, SPECIAL FROM BEIRUT:

AFTER A DAY OF FIERCE FIGHTING BETWEEN SYRIAN TROOPS AND LEBANESE CHRISTIAN MILITIA FORCES, PRESIDENT ELIAS SARKIS ORDERED A CEASE-FIRE HERE AND IN THE CHRISTIAN TOWN OF ZAHLE, 30 MILES TO THE EAST. BUT THE TRUCE WAS ONLY PARTLY OBSERVED.

SPORADIC SHOOTING CONTINUED IN BEIRUT HOURS AFTER THE CEASE-FIRE WAS TO HAVE GONE INTO EFFECT, AND CHRISTIAN ARTILLERYMEN IN THE HILLS OVERLOOKING ZAHLE EXCHANGED FIRE WITH SYRIANS. LEBANESE POLICE SOURCES REPORTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SYRIAN BOMBARDMENT OF THE TOWN HAD STOPPED, ALLOWING MEDICAL AND RELIEF TEAMS TO ENTER FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE VIOLENCE ERUPTED EIGHT DAYS AGO.

THE SOURCES SAID THE TEAMS WERE ESCORTED TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF ZAHLE BY A COMBINED PATROL OF LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS AND SYRIAN SOLDIERS, WHO ARE IN LEBANON AS MEMBERS OF THE 22,000-MEMBER ARAB PEACEKEEPING FORCE.

THE LEBANESE PRESIDENT COULD ORDER BOTH SIDES TO STOP SHOOTING BECAUSE HE IS ALSO FORMALLY COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARAB FORCE, COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF SYRIAN TROOPS AND SYRIAN-CONTROLLED UNITS OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY. THE FORCE WAS SENT HERE IN 1976 TO OVERSEE A CEASEFIRE IN THE LONG AND COSTLY CIVIL WAR.

IT WAS ANNOUNCED DURING THE DAY THAT MR. SARKIS HAD RECEIVED A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER M. HAIG JR. A LETTER BROUGHT YESTERDAY BY AMBASSADOR JOHN GUNTHER DEAN, WHO MET WITH MR. HAIG IN AMMAN, JORDAN, DENOUNCED THE CONTINUED VIOLENCE IN LEBANON AS INTOLERABLE AND CALLED ON ALL PARTIES TO LET THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER.

MR. SARKIS MET FOR TWO HOURS TODAY WITH UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE MORRIS DRAPER SHORTLY AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE AMERICAN OFFICIAL WHO HAD BEEN WITH THE HAIG PARTY. IT WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY KNOWN WHETHER MR. DRAPER WOULD BE VISITING

DAMASCUS AS WELL...

WALL STREET JOURNAL, TEWFIK HISHLAWI IN BEIRUT:

A WEEK OF BLOODY FIGHTING HERE HAS DEMONSTRATED AGAIN THAT LEBNON-ONCE AN ISLAND OF DEMOCRACY AND TRANQUILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST-HAS BECOME A LIGHTNING ROD FOR THE TENSIONS OF THE ENTIRE REGION.

THE DIRECT COMBATANTS HAVE BEEN RIGHTING LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND THE 23,000 MEMBER SYRIAN PEACE-KEEPING FORCE HERE. BUT BEHIND THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS STAND THEIR ALLIES TO THE SOUTH, THE ISRAELIS. AND BEHIND THE SYRIAN PEACE-KEEPING FORCE STAND SYRIA'S COMPLEX INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THOSE OF ITS ALLY, THE SOVIET UNION.

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FAR APART ON THE QUESTION OF WHEN IRAQ WOULD BEGIN
WITHDRAWING ITS FORCES.

ACCORDING TO WESTERN DIPLOMATS IN TEHRAN, IRAQ HAS LOST
ABOUT 10,000 SOLDIERS SINCE THE WAR BEGAN LAST SEPTEMBER.
IRAN HAS LOST AS MANY AS 40,000, MANY OF WHOM WERE IRREGULAR
TROOPS OF THE ISLAMIC "REVOLUTIONARY GUARD," RATHER THAN
REGULAR MILITARY FORCES...

NEW YORK TIMES, ROBERT HERSHEY JR. IN WASHINGTON:
ENERGY SECRETARY JAMES B. EDWARDS, EAGER TO FIND SOME
WAY TO INSURE MORE RAPID FILLING OF THE NATION'S STRATEGIC
PETROLEUM RESERVE, IS SAID TO HAVE DISCUSSED WITH SAUDI
ARABIAN OFFICIALS HERE TWO NOVEL WAYS THIS MIGHT BE DONE.

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SYRIAN LEADERS ARE SOPHISTICATED POLITICIANS, AND THEY
CALCULATE THEIR MOVES IN LEBANON VERY DELIBERATELY. THUS,
MOST ANALYSTS HERE BELIEVE THAT LAST WEEK'S SYRIAN ASSAULT
ON THE CHRISTIAN TOWN OF ZAHLEH, WHICH TRIGGERED THE NEW
ROUND OF FIGHTING, WAS TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH U.S. SECRETARY
OF STATE ALEXANDER HAIG'S MIDEAST TOUR.

THE MESSAGE THAT THE SYRIANS APPARENTLY WANT TO SEND TO
THE U.S. IS THAT ANY MIDEAST PEACE SETTLEMENT THAT EXCLUDES
SYRIA IS DOOMED TO FAILURE. SYRIAN LEADERS, HOWEVER, HAVE
BECOME CONVINCED THAT THEY ARE TARGETS OF THE NEW REAGAN
ADMINISTRATION. THEY BELIEVE THAT AN AMERICAN LED OFFENSIVE
IS UNDERWAY IN THE MIDEAST AIMED AT STRENGTHENING WESTERN
INFLUENCE--WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY WEAKENING AND ISOLATING SUCH
RADICAL ARAB REGIMES AS SYRIA'S.

SECRETARY HAIG, FOR HIS PART, SEEMS TO SEE SYRIA
LARGELY AS A PROXY FOR THE SOVIET UNION. DURING HIS STOP IN
ISRAEL THIS WEEK, HE SEEMED TO BE OPENING THE WAY FOR
POSSIBLE U.S. OR ISRAELI INTERVENTION IN LEBANON WHEN HE
WARNED OF "SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES" IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUES.

DESPITE THIS WEEK'S HEAVY ARTILLERY AND ROCKET FIRE IN
BEIRUT AND AREAS EAST OF THE CITY, MOST ANALYSTS ARE
RELUCTANT TO CONCLUDE THAT LEBANON IS RESUMING A FULL-SCALE
CIVIL WAR.

RETURNS FROM THE TRADE UNION FEDERATION'S ELECTIONS
SHOWED TODAY THAT, DESPITE GAINS BY THE OPPOSITION LABOR
PARTY, THE LIKUD BLOC OF PRIME MINISTER MENACHEM BEGIN HAD
HELD ITS IMPORTANT BASE OF SUPPORT AMONG THE NON-EUROPEAN
WORKING CLASS, RAISING THE LIKELIHOOD OF A CLOSE GENERAL
ELECTION IN JUNE.

VOTING TOOK PLACE YESTERDAY AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE
HISTADRUT, ISRAEL'S LARGEST FEDERATIONS OF UNIONS. MOST OF
THE BALLOTS HAD BEEN COUNTED BY THIS AFTERNOON.

THE LABOR PARTY'S LIST OF DELEGATES TO THE FEDERATION'S
NATIONAL CONVENTION WON 64 PERCENT OF THE VOTES, COMPARED
WITH 55 PERCENT IN THE LAST ELECTIONS, FOUR YEARS AGO.

IT WAS THE FIRST REVERSAL OF A 15-YEAR-DOWNWARD TREND.
THE LIKUD SHARE OF THE VOTES DROPPED TO 25 PERCENT FROM ITS
1977 SHARE OF 23 PERCENT...

WALL STREET JOURNAL, DAVID IGNATIUS AND R. MOHAN:
PROSPECTS FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE PERSIAN GULF WAR
APPEAR TO HINGE ON ONE PRIMARY QUESTION: THE TIMING OF IRAQI
TROOP WITHDRAWALS FROM OCCUPIED IRANIAN TERRITORY.

PEACE HOPES HAVE INCREASED DURING THE PAST WEEK,
LARGELY BECAUSE OF IRAN'S CONCILIATORY RESPONSE TO A NEW SET
OF NEGOTIATING PROPOSALS MADE BY MEDIATORS FROM OTHER
ISLAMIC COUNTRIES. PREVIOUS EFFORTS BY THE ISLAMIC
MEDIATION TEAM HAD BEEN REJECTED OUTRIGHT BY THE IRANIS.

IRAN'S AYATOLLAH MOHAMMAD BEHESHTI, THE LEADER OF THE
COUNTRY'S RULING ISLAMIC REPUBLICAN PARTY, FUELED THE
OPTIMISM YESTERDAY AT A TEHRAN PRESS CONFERENCE. ASKED
WHETHER A PEACE AGREEMENT MIGHT BE REACHED SOON, MR.
BEHESHTI RESPONDED: "WHY NOT?"

THE MEDIATORS HAVE NARROWED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO
SIDES ON SEVERAL ISSUES. BUT IRAQ AND IRAN SEEM TO REMAIN

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ONE OF THEM, ACCORDING TO AN ENERGY DEPARTMENT SOURCE, CALLS FOR THE UNITED STATES TO BUY AND STORE LARGE AMOUNTS OF SAUDI CRUDE OIL AT CURRENT PRICES, WITH A STIPULATION THAT IF AND WHEN THIS OIL IS WITHDRAWN FROM THE RESERVE, THE GOVERNMENT WILL REIMBURSE SAUDI ARABIA FOR ALL INTERVENING PRICE INCREASES. SAUDI OIL CURRENTLY SELLS FOR 32 DOLLARS A BARREL.

THE SECOND IDEA, WHICH DEALS MORE DIRECTLY WITH THE FINANCING PROBLEMS CAUSED BY BUDGET-CUTTING EFFORTS IN CONGRESS, CALLS FOR THE UNITED STATES SIMPLY TO BUY OIL NOW, PRESUMABLY FROM SAUDI ARABIA, AND PAY FOR IT LATER.

MEANWHILE, WITH WORLD OIL IN ABUNDANT SUPPLY, A DELEGATION OF NINE SENATORS IS PREPARING TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA EARLY NEXT WEEK. THE OIL STOCKPILE, TO WHICH RIYADH HAS REPEATEDLY OBJECTED, IS SAID TO BE PROMINENT AMONG THE TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED.

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